

DISTRIBUTION AND ABUNDANCE OF WINTERING PIPING PLOVERS IN SOUTH CAROLINA. Felicia Sanders¹, Sarah Dodd¹, Tom Murphy¹, Melissa Bimbi², Mark Spinks¹, and Paula Sisson². ¹ South Carolina Department of Natural Resources, ² U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Comprehensive surveys of the South Carolina coast for Piping Plovers (*Charadrius melodus*) occurred during January and February of 1997-1999 and 2001. Surveys were conducted within 3 hours of high tide. Location, abundance, weather condition and habitat were recorded for each observation. In 1998, the number of dogs and people at each site was recorded along with disturbance to Piping Plovers. One hundred and three (1997), 94 (1998), 100 (1999) and 80 (2000) Piping Plovers were observed primarily within 1km of inlets on sandy substrates on barrier islands or sandbars. Most sites used by the Piping Plovers were undeveloped, accessible only by boat and fairly undisturbed by humans. The most important site for Piping Plovers (approximately 50%) was the Kiawah, Deveau Bank, Seabrook, and Bird Key complex of islands situated between North Edisto River and Stono Inlet. Harbor Island and Huntington Beach State Park were also important wintering sites. Resightings of color banded Piping Plovers suggest that the birds that winter in South Carolina breed in all three northern geographic regions (Atlantic, Great Lakes, and Northern Great Plains). The next survey for Piping Plovers in South Carolina will be February 2005.